

**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATEWIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #1
November 3, 2005**

ATTENDING:

Mike Kondelis, ADOT- Kingman District	Lupe Harriger, ADOT - TPD
Chuck Gillick, ADOT- N. Region Traffic	Carol Slaker, ADOT - TPD
John Harper, ADOT- Flagstaff District	Sam Elters, ADOT - State Engineer
Dave Edwards, ADOT- Right-of-Way	John Pein, ADOT - TPD
Reed Henry, ADOT-Traffic	Luana Capponi ASLD
Paul O'Brien, ADOT- PreDesign	Manish Patel, ASLD
Reza Karimvand, ADOT-Baja Region Traffic	Grant Buma, CRIT
Donna Jones, ADOT- ADOT Permits	Gregg Simmons, BLM
Sylvia Hanna, ADOT- Permits	Bryan Perry, Attorney General's Office/Transp.
Daniel Williams, ADOT- Tucson District	Bob Hazlett, MAG
Bob Miller, ADOT - SPM	Kevin Adam, League of AZ Cities & Towns
Dale Buskirk, ADOT- TPD	

Consultants: Rick Ensdorff, Phil Demosthenes, Kristine Williams, Mike Connors, Caraly Foreman, Lyndy Long

NOT ATTENDING: Cherie Campbell, PAG, Chris Fetzer, NACOG, Mary Viparina, ADOT - VPM

MEETING MINUTES:

Dale Buskirk called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming. The project is very important for Arizona. There is much growth in the state and we need to maintain the operational integrity of the highway system. This is not the first attempt at an access management program. Earlier attempts at a statewide program were not successful. The State Transportation Board is very supportive of this effort.

The process began by contacting many people at ADOT and several stakeholders. Once they supported the effort, ADOT developed a scope of work and issued an RFP. A consultant was selected and the technical advisory committee [TAC] was formed. This is a very important committee, and it is critical that members are actively engaged throughout the process as this is a statewide program. Other jurisdictions and entities will also be key to the success of the project. There is a complex interplay between land use and transportation planning. It is important to review the document titled "Legal Issues Pertaining to the Implementation of the Access Management Program." Under the existing legal authority, ADOT may implement this regulatory type of program, similar to those implemented in several other states.

Introductions were made throughout the room.

Sam Elters stated that the State Engineer's office fully supports the program. Dale Buskirk mentioned that this endorsement is very important to the project.

Bob Hazlett showed a map depicting that 25 percent of the state is left for development – all along state highways. MAG [Maricopa Association of Governments] is in full support of the project and offers any help they can provide.

Grant Buma stated that he serves as a liaison to the Intertribal Council of Arizona (ITCA). There has been a lack of attention to the rural areas, particularly in regards to fund allocations. Dale Buskirk clarified that the purpose of this project is to focus on access management, not allocation of resources.

Bryan Perry stated that he often advises permit supervisors for ADOT, and will be representing the Arizona Attorney General's office and focusing on the legal implications of this program.

Carol Slaker reviewed the meeting agenda, contents of the team notebooks, and introduced the consultant team, who has much experience with these types of efforts in other states.

URS Project Manager Rick Ensdorff started the presentation with a review of the notebook, which will be supplemented with materials throughout the project and will serve as a reference tool for the TAC. Rick Ensdorff worked on transportation in Colorado for 20 years, during which time he helped to develop the access management program as it evolved from the early 1980s. Colorado has a very successful program, but it has taken much hard work. It is important to first get a good process in place, and over time the program will start to meet the needs of the state of Arizona. He then reviewed the "Project Team" slide and introduced other members of the consultant team.

Phil Demosthenes led the charge on the Colorado access management program and said that they focused on that system and looked also to resources in other parts of the country.

Kristine Williams is from Tampa, and is seen nationally as an expert on access issues. She is one of the authors of the TRB Access Management Manual.

Vergil Stover has completed design and teaching on access management across the country.

Mike Connors from HDR has done work around the state and is familiar with current issues.

This team will provide the TAC with the resources needed to develop this program, which is a high priority for us as it is for the State.

Rick Ensdorff then moved to the "Access Decisions" slide, which provides a framework for the process and presents all the elements that will need to fit together to make access decisions that will meet the needs of the State. Traffic and safety is important to consider, construction practices should be consistent, and local agencies need to be involved in partnerships for the project to be successful. One of the first steps in the project will be to define goals and objectives for the access management plan to set the path for the rest of the project.

Dale Buskirk added that there is a close relationship between transportation and land use planning, and aside from local agencies, tribal entities and the Arizona State Land Department also do land use planning.

Rick Ensdorff stated that this is intended to be an interactive process and encouraged the group to ask questions during the presentation. We want to hear different perspectives from the group.

The next slide was "Balance", and Rick Ensdorff discussed how successful access management programs have a balance between the consistency of the process and outcomes. There should not be a different process for different developers, for instance. You also need flexibility, as we understand that issues are not always "black and white," and sometimes we find ourselves working in gray areas.

We achieve this balance through many different things, including:

- Partnerships internally with ADOT and externally with different agencies, tribes, BLM, planning departments in cities or counties.
- Clearly defining goals and objectives so everyone knows where the project is headed
- Effective design standards, which we will pull from several resources
- Comprehensive classification system, which is critical and sets the framework for the rest of the plan
- Ongoing program management and training, so decision makers know what the project is about
- Adaptability, which is achieved through (1) the variance process, which will prescribe ways of dealing with the “unknown”, (2) access management plans, a technique used in Colorado that allows agencies to come to the state and look at local issues to develop a specific plan that would overlay on the state program, and assist with building local relationships, and (3) performance measures, so decisions are based on performance and a common understanding of desired results.

The next slide was the work flow diagram. Right now we are in start-up. We have completed the initial legal review, an important starting point so we have a better understanding of legal issues. We have formed the TAC, and the next step will be the state of practice review both here and nationally. We will be talking to the TAC members to see where things are now, what's good or bad about current practices, and will provide to the TAC a national context also.

After the first of the year, we will have the goals and objectives defined. There will be more TAC meetings in addition to statewide workshops, from which we will bring information back to the TAC. We will then develop the framework of the project and classification system. Then, we will determine how implementation will work and what strategies are needed. A draft and final report will be prepared, and we will go to the Transportation Board for discussion and action.

John Harper asked what the timeframe for the rest of the project would be. Rick Ensdorff said the entire schedule is 18 months. TAC meetings are spread throughout the schedule at key decision points. There will also be a “check-in” presentation to the Board, in addition to workshops early in the project and again when we have developed the classification system and guidelines. The project end date is scheduled for January 2007.

Dave Edwards asked if the public outreach will involve one or several meetings; Rick Ensdorff clarified each workshop would involve multiple meetings.

Reza Karimvand asked for a description of the workshops and format. Rick Ensdorff stated we will look to the TAC for help on who should come to those and how they should be formatted to make them more interactive. There will be seven TAC meetings total (six after this one), probably held in this room. There are a few people who could not make it today, and we are thinking of contacting local planning agencies at the city or county level to bring that perspective to the group.

Stakeholder and agency briefings will be occurring over the next two months. We will also be speaking with the TAC members and ADOT engineers. We want to know how your access management programs are working. Some of these meetings may be by phone due to logistics.

The intent of the statewide workshops is to engage as many people as possible. There would be three workshops during the project, each would consist of 3-4 meetings to cover the state over the course of 1- 1½ weeks. We want to know what the issues are related to this part of the project. We want to engage private entities, developers, local agencies, or local officials if they are interested, and it should be an interactive opportunity.

Dave Edwards stated that they are working with communities to help them understand the need for access management, and this should be presented to them carefully. Rick Ensdorff stated that in addition to the TAC, District Engineers will be critical in helping us to identify meeting locations and audience.

Bob Hazlett stated that they [MAG] have also talked about doing presentations on this topic to their membership, which includes elective officials and city managers and public works personnel. Not many state arterials are within the Valley but MAG would like to see access management incorporated into city planning efforts throughout the metro area.

Bob Miller asked if the ADOT Communication and Community Partnerships department should be included on the TAC so that they are involved in the community partnerships, and with their local knowledge and relationships everything could be coordinated with them. Kristine Williams stated this would probably be a good idea.

Mike Kondelis asked if the TAC is just agencies and if the intent is to involve other parties through the workshops. Rick Ensdorff answered that this is the intent of the workshops, which will allow the involvement of private sector people, homebuilders, etc. At this level, we felt it would be more efficient to build partnerships here with people making these types of decisions. Mike Kondelis said these workshops will then be critical for buy-in by these other parties. Rick Ensdorff said they would. There is a lot of outreach and connections to be made outside the TAC. We want them to have a place in the process for us to listen to them, even if we cannot address all of their issues.

John Harper expressed concern that there be enough workshops around the state to obtain all the necessary input. There will be much variation between different parts of the state, and he wondered if too many areas are combined if the workshops would be effective. Rick Ensdorff emphasized that is why we need help from the TAC. We do need the workshops to be successful in reaching out to a wide variety of stakeholders – right now we are only at the concept level for this task and are looking to the group to help with details.

URS project team member Kristine Williams introduced herself to the group and said it is exciting to be a part of this effort at the beginning, and the project will evolve throughout its completion. She was contacted by the Florida DOT several years ago, who told her they were having problems coordinating with local governments due to lot splits. She helped them to develop the regulation needed and conducted training with local governments. Part of the problem was that the local jurisdictions did not understand access management, but as they started to learn about it they brought a lot of support and creativity. Now they look to the state for leadership. Education and outreach is critical. Another effort in Florida involved inviting developers to round table discussions to learn about their concerns and objectives.

Her efforts will involve the “State of Practice Review.” Locally, she wants to know where you are now. Local plans have been developed but there is no state guidance. Another question would be, of what you have done, what is working and is it being implemented effectively? We will then look at geometric design by collecting examples of statewide and national design standards to help us identify leaders in this area.

Other resources available to us include the TRB Access Management Manual, cooperative agreements, interchange management, etc. Her role is to bring the best resources to you, what works and alternatives for Arizona. We will also incorporate legal start-up efforts. We have already seen the lot split issue here, and it is an issue nationally. However, there are fairly simple alternatives to allow local government to successfully manage access. From an evaluation of current practices, we will identify core issues and alternatives to deal with those issues. Then we will move towards developing a strategic plan and program goals and objectives to guide the continuation of work. We also need to consider permitting consistency, variances, and plan implementation. She indicated that information will need to be quickly collected from the TAC and assembled in the next few months.

Also starting immediately, URS project team member Vergil Stover will be looking at access location and design, such as medians, 2-way left turn lanes, median openings, etc. Florida DOT had people complaining about medians so we developed a public information program for median projects. We will also be looking at median openings and how to respond to the pressure for these, and at driveway geometrics, for which there is a national study beginning.

URS project team member Phil Demosthenes introduced himself to the group and said he ran the Colorado access management program for 28 years. We are not trying to bring Colorado to Arizona, but you will hear about it a lot because Colorado is the first state in the West to have a successful program; it is a good model for us to refer to. We will be developing a policy and process framework, because we need to know how the process works and we need all the staff together to determine what framework helps all of them. Questions we will ask include what do they do, how, when, do they talk with each other, and if they don't talk how do we get them to? Part of getting people to the same understanding is education. We will look at the permitting process and who makes the decisions. We will ask what do local agencies like and dislike, and identify all related processes and how we transition that into this new process. There will be a lot of work involved in the transition – we will have to redesign all the forms and procedures and get legal approval on everything.

Phil Demosthenes then reviewed the Decision Process flowchart from Colorado. He said the biggest pressure on him was how to achieve consistency. Decisions need to be made in the right sequence, and if they are, they are better decisions. If a connection request is received, the first consideration should be the functional integrity of the system, or, does it meet the need or criteria for direct access. You should also consider necessity (need for driveway or signals), and finally, work down to geometric decisions. Having a structure ensures that final decisions have considered the proof of necessity, and the location of least impact to the system. This process helps make decisions consistent.

Phil Demosthenes then discussed the Hierarchy of Classifications slide. Access decisions need to be based on roadway functions and that is why classifications are so important. We will design and test the classification system and most importantly keep it simple; simplicity helps improve consistency.

Phil Demosthenes reviewed the Colorado classification system slide. Colorado has eight levels that are divided into interstate, expressway, rural, non-rural, and frontage roads. When someone comes in looking for access, consider what roadway they are next to; the classification system ties in closely with land use. You need to look at the realistic aspects of adjacent abutting uses mile-by-mile.

Grant Buma asked when a classification system is developed, if Colorado tried to match the BIA classification system. Phil Demosthenes responded that they did not. Grant Buma stated that the BIA is now doing functional classifications on all reservations and are having problems because they are not consistent between all areas. Phil Demosthenes stated that in Colorado they used their functional system as guidance. Also, keep in mind that the classifications can change in 5-20 years, which provides a way to address local issues or changes in land use. Grant Buma added that there will be more complex issues for tribes in urban areas, where one side of a single street may be in tribal authority. Phil Demosthenes stated that to address this we may have to classify each side of the street differently. Grant Buma stated there are more tribes here than in Colorado, and asked if there will be an effort for consistency. He discussed issues regarding traffic lights and other traffic control measures. Phil Demosthenes clarified that our effort only applies to access management and will not deal with funding for lighting, etc. This process deals with access for private property and is separate from other policy issues.

Phil Demosthenes discussed that if a city wants a change in classification the issue goes before the Board. This will be a living document allowing those changes as necessary. Reza Karimvand asked if he had discussed turn-back roads with local agencies. Phil Demosthenes stated they did not as these were city issues. Reza Karimvand asked if this would be incorporated into the criteria and Phil Demosthenes stated they would not.

Phil Demosthenes then discussed the Regulations vs. Guidelines slide. The states that used a regulatory approach have consistently been successful, while those that used only guidelines have generally been less so. He then discussed the Overview of Legal Issues slide. We will be building on previous work and stated that we do have regulatory authority to develop and implement this plan. We will just expand on the existing authority and organize the administrative code as needed. Most states have included design standards. Our current regulations do not and we need to decide if we want to. These standards need to be flexible, which can be accomplished through careful selection of the language. We can also set standards for “wildcat” subdivisions [landlocked subdivisions] so the county can look to the state when they need to make those decisions.

Carol Slaker reviewed the TAC roles and responsibilities slide. We need consensus for the regulatory program, for the TAC to provide us with much feedback, let us know if others should be included in the group, network with and inform their agencies of the project, and advocate for the project with their agencies.

Rick Ensdorff stated that three questions were emailed to the group. We received valuable feedback from many members but wanted to present the questions to the group to obtain additional input.

As the group discussed the first question regarding the necessary key elements of a successful plan, Grant Buma asked if the objective of this process was to gain uniformity and if this process was a mechanism for ADOT to override community needs and preferences or if it was a tool for communities to gain access. John Pein stated that ADOT is trying to implement an interactive process to integrate local needs, not to override them. Grant Buma mentioned that he will be reporting on this project to the Intertribal Council of Arizona. John Pein stated that the ITC will be contacted to confirm their TAC representation and communication preferences.

Other team members stated that a safe system, and therefore safe communities, are important elements. Another member stated that commitment from local jurisdictions and developers is key, and is different than “buy-off.” There is a concern that although they support the concept of the process, they may not support the practical application if it does not serve their purpose at that time. Bob Hazlett added that during his role as a consultant in Colorado, he found that education on the process is ongoing and another key element, and that it needs to be ongoing, not just during the duration of this project schedule. In particular, people need to know the benefits of access management. Arizona is the highest accident state, and a goal of this program will be to mitigate the conflict points. In his prior experience, he felt that the developers accepted the program as did the consultants, because in a regulatory framework some of their preferences would in essence be illegal, which would prevent them from pursuing those preferences further and force them into evaluating more closely their on-site circulation. Sam Elters added that it is important to understand the implications of not managing access, as the system deteriorates.

John Harper wants to learn more about developers that have accepted access limitations and how that has work. Bob Hazlett stated that consultants are mindful of the regulations when making recommendations to developers, and circumventing or not abiding by law greatly increases their liability. Kristine Williams added that incorporating the local ordinances and regulatory framework helps with the coordination.

Grant Buma asked if developing criteria within this group would circumvent the partnering process. Rick Ensdorff answered that there are many other issues to address through partnering. This group provides a starting point, but concepts may change during the process and through discussions.

Bob Miller stated that we also need to focus on major landowners who have significant influence on local communities. In general, developers understand the importance of good access, but it is the landowners who want unlimited access. Reza Karimvand stated that in his experience, developers want access and are not concerned with safety issues, just economic factors. He also asked what they are expected to do when

experiencing pressure from developers. Often if access is denied, a developer puts in their request to a “higher power” or through a variance. Phil Demosthenes answered that the regulations often prevent this, although it still happens occasionally, and that if you violate the law liability increases. A good plan provides enough flexibility to evaluate individual cases. Bryan Perry added that the things he feels are important include a plan that is legally defensible and budget conscious.

Kevin Adam said that if we really want a commitment at the local level, education is important and the workshops likely will not be adequate, particularly if we will be developing regulations that will impact local planning and zoning departments and local economies. He is willing to facilitate more representation (from WACOG, rural counties and cities).

NEXT STEPS / FUTURE TAC MEETINGS

Members were asked to email their responses to the other two questions to Carol Slaker, which we did not finish due to time constraints.

Members were also reminded that the consultant team will be contacting them for stakeholder interviews in the next couple of months. If members have a planned meeting(s) scheduled at their agency or representing body that could serve as a time to discuss access management, they were asked to let Carol Slaker know by email.

John Pein added that the group should keep a state perspective in mind, and encouraged the TAC members to challenge us with their ideas and suggestions.

The next TAC meeting was tentatively scheduled.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.